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Watergate job botched on purpose, says Nixon

By Wesley Pruden
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The Watergate burglars "wanted to get caught," former President Richard M. Nixon says in a remarkable new television interview, and only "the cockeyed notion" that he might have been destroying evidence kept him from destroying the tapes that destroyed his presidency.

The Watergate break-in, on June 17, 1972, was so clumsily done, Mr. Nixon says, "that I would have to say that a pretty good case could be made, and some have made it, that it was deliberately botched up."

Mr. Nixon chides those who say he has never apologized for the Watergate episode.

"There's no way that you could apologize that is more eloquent, more decisive, more finite or to say that you are sorry, which would exceed resigning the presidency of the United States.

"That said it all. And I don't intend to say any more."

The interviews, conducted over 38 hours by Frank Gannon, a former White House fellow who had worked with the former president on his books, will be televised Sunday night on CBS' "60 Minutes" and on Tuesday night on the CBS program "American Parade."

In these interviews, for which CBS paid \$500,000 to Mr. Gannon and the former president, Mr. Nixon describes with astonishing candor how as president he entered a world where "bugs" and hidden cameras recorded the most intimate details in the lives of world leaders and visitors to embassies in capitals around the world.

"One of the reasons that the release of the Pentagon Papers caused great concern in the CIA," he says, "was that one of the items in the Pentagon Papers could only have come from the fact that we had [Leonid] Brezhnev's car bugged."

U.S. intelligence agencies "bug" foreign leaders. Mr. Nixon says, "but we don't do it here."

Embassies are often the targets of electronic surveillance, he says. "For example, it's been quite well known that both in this country and in the Soviet Union we attempt to bug each other's embassies and we attempt to bug a lot of other embassies in this country, and we should, because that's expected to be done."

So far as he knows, Mr. Nixon said, neither the State Department nor the CIA bugged Mr. Brezhnev at Blair House, Camp David or at Mr. Nixon's former home in San Clemente — though he concedes that it could have been done without his knowledge.

The late Soviet premier was described by Mr. Nixon as a "ladies' man" who was so obsessed with sex that he brought his "masseuse" — "a very handsome full-bosomed Russian girl" — with him to Camp David. Once, while the president and Mrs. Nixon were walking down a "welcome line" at an airport in the Soviet Union, the Soviet leader offered Mr. Nixon his pick of "the pretty girls."

"He had sort of a macho attitude and so forth," says Mr. Nixon. "Mrs. Nixon did not particularly appreciate that aspect of him. I mean, not that she's prudish about it."

On another occasion when Mr. Brezhnev was visiting in the United States, Mr. Nixon recalled, he considered giving the Soviet leader a Dictaphone as "a minor state gift."

"I asked Brezhnev whether he used the Dictaphone," Mr. Nixon says. "We had already agreed to give him another luxury car for his

collection of automobiles. He says, 'Oh, no, no, no.' He says, 'I never want to use a Dictaphone machine.' He said, 'I don't like to dictate into an impersonal machine, and then with a little sort of wink, he said, 'I'd much rather dictate to a pretty girl... You know, when you wake up in the middle of the night and want to make a note, it's always very useful to have somebody there in the room to give it to.' "

Mr. Gannon, his interviewer, asks whether the "gossip" a president receives from the National Security Council and the State Department tells a president whether a leader with whom he is negotiating "plays around with women."

Replies the former president: "Oh, yes." This sort of information, he says, is of more than merely prurient interest. "You've got to know what people are interested in."

Mr. Nixon, replying to Mr. Gannon's pointed questions, discusses his intimate emotions about his wife — and about the impression that Mr. Gannon characterized as widespread that the Nixons have endured a "loveless marriage" kept together for the sake of their two daughters and politics.

"Look," Mr. Nixon says, "when I hear people slobbering around publicly, 'I love her' and all that stuff, that raises a question in my mind as to how much of it is real. [That is] just the way I am, it's the way she is, too. We just don't go for those public declarations of love."

Asks Mr. Gannon, bluntly: "Do you love her?"

"...of course, I certainly do, and I respect her, too, and she respects me. We don't hold hands in public. Now, I don't mind other people doing it. But that's the way we are. And sometimes love, I think, is much greater when you don't make a big point of showing it off and talking about it. It's much deeper, in my view."

Mr. Nixon said that extensive recording equipment was already in place in the White House when he became the tenant on Jan. 20, 1969.

"The amusing thing about that is,

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